

The same observations as to the moulting of the wing-feathers applies to this as to the preceding species.

357. *QUERQUEDULA HOTTENTOTTA*, Smith. Hottentot Teal.

Male and female, shot near Potchefstroom in the month of November.

ANAS SPARSA, Smith. White-spotted Duck.

Male, shot 7th March. Total length $22\frac{1}{2}$ inches, bill $2\frac{1}{4}$, wing $10\frac{1}{4}$, tarsus $2\frac{1}{8}$, tail 5; weight 2 lb. 8 oz. Irides hazel; bill, upper mandible slaty horn-colour, with a large patch in the centre and also the tip black, under mandible pale pink; tarsi and feet dull orange-yellow, with the webs and back parts dusky.

Female, shot 19th April. Total length $21\frac{1}{2}$ inches; weight 2 lb. 6 oz. Irides dusky brown; bill, upper mandible slaty blue, with tip and central patch black, under mandible pinkish; tarsi and feet as in the male. The whole canal to the stomach crammed with grass-seeds.

PHALACROCORAX AFRICANUS (Gm.). Long-tailed African Cormorant.

Male, shot 26th July. Partially in nuptial dress. Irides bright light crimson; bill chrome-yellow, but light dusky brown on the ridge, tip, and part of the lower mandible, the latter being also more or less barred; tarsi and feet black. Remains of fish in the stomach.

These Cormorants are tolerably numerous about Potchefstroom, but appear to keep to themselves, for they fish and move from place to place in a solitary manner, passing along the river, generally high overhead, early in the morning to their favourite pools, and returning pretty regularly in the evening to where they sleep; they swim very low in the water.

XXV.—*Various Corrections of Synonymy in the Family Sylviidæ.* By HENRY SEEBOHM.

IN preparing the synonymy of the fifth volume of the 'Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum,' I have been obliged to

disallow the claims of many species to be considered new. These identifications with previously described species will appear in their proper places in the synonymy of the various birds treated of in the volume, but, from the nature of the work, without note or comment. To my mind, whatever value may attach to an opinion is increased at least tenfold by a concise statement of the grounds upon which it is based, so that the readers may be able to form an opinion of their own, instead of accepting it on the authority of even the best expert. Some of our most accurate writers on ornithology have neglected this important point, partly perhaps from a mistaken endeavour to be brief, and partly, it is to be feared, from an unwillingness to commit themselves to a definite line of argument, the accuracy of which might hereafter be impeached. I have frequently been told, when asking for the reason why an opinion in which I could not coincide was expressed, that the writer had no doubt that he had excellent reasons at the time for coming to the conclusions which he recorded, but that now, after the lapse of some years, he was not able to recall his former line of argument to memory. Such replies are eminently unsatisfactory. The day in which opinions were accepted solely on authority is past. Probably we are in danger of rushing to the opposite extreme, and are more inclined, in those cases where the evidence does not satisfy our reason, to give the casting vote in favour of doubt.

It appears to me that new material is so continually coming forward, and old material is so frequently being raked up from the nooks and corners where it has been lying hid, that no ornithological opinion can be considered final, or even of much value, unless accompanied by the statement of the facts upon which it is based.

In addition to the "slaughter of the innocents," which I propose to justify, to the best of my ability, in the present paper there are also numerous errors of identification to correct, which also require some explanation more full than is consistent with the plan of the 'Catalogue of Birds.'

Acrocephalus arabicus, Heugl. Orn. N.O.-Afr. i. p. 289

(1869). I have examined Heuglin's type in the Senckenberg Museum in Frankfort, and am unable to distinguish it from *A. turdoides* (Meyer). The wing measures 3·48 inches, and the second and third primaries are equal and longest.

Acrocephalus fulvolateralis, Sharpe, Layard's B. S. Afr. p. 289 (1877). The type in the British Museum agrees in all its dimensions and in its wing-formula with *A. turdoides* (Meyer), of which there can be no doubt that it is an example in autumn plumage. Through the kindness of Mr. Wardlaw Ramsay I have been able to examine a copy of that rare work, Naumann's 'Naturgeschichte der Land- und Wasser-Vögel des nördlichen Deutschlands und angränzender Länder.' In the "Nachtrag" to this work, vol. iv. p. 199, published in 1811, the genus *Acrocephalus* is carefully characterized, and seven species are named and the specific characters enumerated. The first of these is *Acrocephalus lacustris* (p. 201), which is identified with *Turdus arundinaceus*, Linn. The term *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* having been so universally applied to *A. streperus* (Vieill.), amongst others by Naumann, on the page last quoted, the Great Sedge-Warbler will probably be best designated for the future as *Acrocephalus lacustris*, Naum., a name which antedates *A. turdoides* (Meyer) and is not antedated by *A. junco* (Pall.). For the information of ornithologists anxious to distinguish themselves by discovering forgotten names, I may state that there are no Latin names of birds given in this rare work of Naumann's, except in the genus *Acrocephalus*, beyond an occasional quotation of Linnæus.

Locustella japonica, Cassin, Proc. Ac. Sc. Phil. 1858, p. 194. The type in the museum of the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia is almost an exact duplicate of the type of *L. ochotensis* (Midd.) in the St. Petersburg Museum, the feathers of the upper parts showing traces only of darker centres. The name must therefore sink into a synonym of Middendorff's species.

Locustella minor, David et Oust. Ois. Chine, p. 250 (1877). The type of this species is lost; but l'Abbé David assures me that his name must be added to the synonyms of *L. certhiola*

(Pall.), of which he is now satisfied that his supposed new species was a somewhat small example.

Luscinia hendersoni, Cassin, Proc. Ac. Sc. Phil. 1858, p. 194. This bird has been identified by Dresser and Hume with the Turkestan and Indian species. I have carefully examined the type in the Museum of the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, and find it to be an example of *Locustella minuta*, Swinh., which I take to be only a form of *L. lanceolata* (Temm.). The Turkestan and Indian species must therefore stand as *L. straminea* (Severtz.).

Arundinax davidiana, Verr. N. Arch. Mus. Bull. vi. p. 37 (1870). The type of this alleged species is in the Museum of the Jardin des Plantes in Paris, and is, in my opinion, a specimen of *Horornis fortipes*, Hodgs., or, as I prefer to call the bird, *Cettia fortipes* (Hodgs.). It is described, and not badly figured, in David et Oustalet's *Oiseaux de la Chine*, pl. 20. If the Formosan species, *Horeites robustipes*, Swinh., be, as I maintain, the same as the Himalayan bird, Abbé David's examples from Chinese Thibet are specially interesting as coming from an intermediate locality.

Horornis fulviventris, Hodgs. MS. Drawings (in the Brit. Mus.) of Birds of Nepal, Passeres, pl. 63, no. 878—which name was first published by Hodgson in Gray's Zool. Misc. p. 82 (1844), and accompanied for the first time with a description of the bird in an article contributed by Hodgson to the P. Z. S. 1845, p. 31—must sink into a synonym of *Phylloscopus fuscatus*, Blyth, a name which dates from 1842. Hodgson's type, which was originally in the India Museum, and is now in the British Museum, is conclusive upon the question. I am inclined to think that Hodgson was right in separating this species from *Phylloscopus*. In their general style of coloration, their large bastard primary, and their somewhat graduated tail, *P. fuscatus* (Blyth), *P. schwarzi* (Radde), *P. armandi* (Milne-Edwards), *P. indicus* (Jerdon), and *P. fuliginiventris* (Hodgs.) are aberrant *Phylloscopi*, and appear to me to be more nearly allied to *Luscinia melanopogon* (Temm.). This genus might consist of the following species:—*Luscinia aedon* (*Muscicapa aedon*, Pall.);

L. gracilirostris (*Calamodyta gracilirostris*, Hartl.); *L. melanopogon* (*Sylvia melanopogon*, Temm.); *L. major* (*Dumeticola major*, Brooks); *L. luteiventris* (*Tribura luteoventris*, Hodgs.); *L. thoracica* (*Dumeticola thoracica*, Blyth); *L. flaviventris* (*Horornis flaviventer*, Hodgs.); *L. fuscata* (*Phyllopneuste fuscata*, Blyth); *L. schwarzi* (*Sylvia* (*Phyllopneuste*) *schwarzi*, Radde); *L. armandi* (*Abrornis armandi*, Milne-Edwards); *L. indica* (*Sylvia indica*, Jerdon); *L. fuliginiventris* (*Horornis fuliginiventer*, Hodgs.); and *L. neglecta* (*Phylloscopus neglectus*, Hume).

Arundinax flemingi, Swinhoe, P. Z. S. 1870, p. 440.

Herbivocula incerta, David et Oustal. Ois. de la Chine, p. 246 (1877).

Oreopneuste affinis, David et Oustal. Ois. de la Chine, p. 267 (1877).

A careful examination of the type of the first-mentioned bird in the Swinhoe collection, of the description of the second (the type having been lost), and of the type of the third in the Museum of the Jardin des Plantes in Paris, leads me to the conclusion that these three supposed new species may be all referred to *Phylloscopus schwarzi* (Radde). They vary slightly in size, but not more so than individuals of allied species usually do, and the slight variations of colour are apparently only seasonal. In relative length of wing and tail, in wing-formula, and in shape of bill they do not differ.

Tribura luteiventris, Hodgs., apud David et Oustal. Ois. Chine, p. 239. Abbé David's skins in the Museum of the Jardin des Plantes in Paris are incorrectly identified. The upper parts are olive-brown instead of russet-brown, and the wings are longer instead of shorter than the tail. They are the supposed young in first winter plumage of *Dumeticola thoracica* of Blyth, the *Dumeticola affinis* of Taczanowski, from Lake Baical, of Prjevalski from Kansu, and of Abbé David from Moupin.

Lusciniopsis brevipennis, Verr. N. Arch. Mus. Bull. vi. p. 65 (1871).

Dumeticola mandelli, Brooks, Stray Feathers, 1875, p. 284.

These two supposed new species agree precisely in dimen-

sions, relative length of wings and tail, wing-formula, and shape of bill with *Tribura luteoventris*, Hodgs. The type of the former, in the Museum of the Jardin des Plantes in Paris, agrees also in colour; but the types of the latter, in Mandelli's collection, present slight variations. One skin has spots on the throat, and the other traces of slate-grey on the breast. I imagine these only to be seasonal changes; but they may prove hereafter to be specific characters, as Blyth suspected to be the case in his nearly allied *Dumeticola thoracica*.

Phyllopneuste trochilus, Hodgson, Gray's Zool. Misc. p. 82 (1844). The type, formerly in the India Museum, and now in the British Museum, is a skin of *Phylloscopus lugubris*, Blyth.

Abrornis xanthogaster, Hodgson, Gray's Zool. Misc. p. 82 (1844). This species was incorrectly identified by Horsfield and Moore (Cat. E.I. Co. Mus. i. p. 337) with *Phylloscopus lugubris*, Blyth. The types, formerly in the India Museum, and now in the British Museum, are skins of *Phylloscopus affinis*, Tickell.

Abrornis tenuiceps, Hodgs. Gray's Zool. Misc. p. 82 (1844). The type, in the British Museum, is a skin of *Phylloscopus humei* (Brooks); but as Hodgson appears nowhere to have given any description of his species, Brooks's name will stand, according to the British-Association Rules. There are also skins of this species in the British Museum labelled *P. modestus* in Blyth's handwriting.

Abrornis chloronotus, Hodgs. MS. Drawings (in the Brit. Mus.) of Birds of Nepal, Passeres, pl. 57, no. 839, undoubtedly represents *Phylloscopus proregulus* (Pall.), without the grey on the head and throat and without the white on the inside webs of the two outside tail-feathers characteristic of *P. maculipennis*, Blyth. On the other hand, in the same MS. work, App. pl. 45, also no. 839, are two figures undoubtedly representing Blyth's species. In the British Museum both species are represented amongst Hodgson's types, both being numbered "839." Hodgson does not appear ever to have described his species, but catalogues it in Gray's

'Zoological Miscellany' as "*Abornis chloronopus* vel *Regulus modestus* auct." Under these circumstances I do not see that Hodgson has the slightest claim to have his name recognized at all.

Phylloscopus occipitalis (Jerdon), fide Seebohm, Ibis, 1877, p. 80.

Phylloscopus trochiloides (Sundev.), apud Seebohm, Ibis, 1877, p. 81.

The former is the spring plumage, and the latter the autumn plumage of *P. occipitalis*, Blyth.

Phylloscopus viridipennis (Blyth), apud Seebohm, Ibis, 1877, p. 82.

Phylloscopus (Reguloides) flavo-olivaceus, Hume, Stray Feath. v. p. 504 (1877).

These are both synonyms of the true *Phylloscopus reguloides* (Blyth).

Phylloscopus presbytis (Müller), from Timor, is probably the *Muscicapa presbytis* of S. Müll. Tydschr. v. Natuurl. Geschied. en Phys. ii. p. 331 (1835), from Sumatra. It is the winter plumage of *P. viridipennis*, Blyth, whose name will stand, since Müller's name is unaccompanied by any description.

XXVI.—Notes on the Ornithology of Ceylon.

By E. L. LAYARD, F.Z.S.

THE last mail put me in possession of Parts I. and II. of Captain Legge's 'Birds of Ceylon,' with which I am especially delighted. It would ill become me to criticize the scientific history of the birds as given by the author; but as a "pioneer," as he calls me, in the field, permit me to add my testimony to the accurate descriptions of the habits of our feathered friends and the localities they inhabit. For the last two or three days I have not been in New Caledonia! Bodily, perhaps, I have; but in spirit I have roamed at will in the "Mookalane" of the south, the scrubby jungles of the west coast, and the trackless forests of the "Wanoy," over the vast